

MUSINE KOKALARI **and** **Social Democracy in Albania**

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List of Abbreviations

Acronym Definition:

CP	Communist Party
LNC	National Liberation Front (<i>Fronti Nacional Çlirimtare</i>)
LSI	Socialist Movement for Integration (<i>Lëvizja Socialiste për Integrim</i>)
PSD	Social Democratic Party (<i>Partia Socialdemokrate e Shqipërisë</i>)

Contents

1. About Social Democracy.....	8
2. The Foundation of the Social Democratic Party of Albania.....	9
3. A Social Democratic Party Program.....	11
4. The Note to the Allies.....	12
5. Kokalari's Impact on the Albanian Political and Social Culture: Is Social Democracy still present or possible?.....	13
6. References.....	17
7. Appendix.....	19
• The Ten-Point Program of the Nationalist Organization <i>Balli Kombëtar</i>	
• Memorandum of the Democratic Union addressed to the Allies	
• The Program of the Social Democratic Party	
• Excerpt from Kokalari's trial	

Introduction

When thinking about Social Democracy, Albania is probably on the very bottom of the list of countries that would come to mind. It is not surprising since most of the time politicians overshadow their political parties, and names such as Friedrich Ebert, Willy Brandt, Olof Palme and Helmut Schmidt weigh heavier in the history of politics than the name Musine Kokalari. It is not because of lesser intellect, or age, or the fact that she was a woman but rather repressive surroundings that nip new ideas in the bud.

In attempts to found the first Albanian Social Democratic Party (*Partia Social Demokrate*) in 1943, she has been arrested three years later for her political views and sentenced to 30 years imprisonment, of which she served 16. Musine Kokalari remains one of the brightest and most important writers in her country, the first woman to get published in Albania and an exemplary symbol of the repressions in the Enver Hoxha regime.

So far little has been published about Kokalari's political engagement (in the English language (or any other for that matter), limiting Social Democracy to a mere Northern and Western European phenomenon. The beginning of Social democratic ideals were also present in Albania yet democracy in general has always had a troublesome history of paving its way in the autocratic environment of the country. In retrospect, it is inevitable that Musine Kokalari and the initiators around her had to fail, however, based on a given Social democratic history in Albania, has anything been learned from this? Is Social Democracy still present or possible in Albania?

In an attempt to broaden the understanding and perception of Social Democracy, it is crucial to also illuminate 'failed' endeavors. This paper primarily seeks to give an account of Social democratic trends in Albania with special emphasis on Musine Kokalari and her struggle for pluralism. And secondly it serves as a reminder, not only of the atrocities in the Communist regime, but also for the necessity to have an ongoing discourse about historical and social issues that accumulated over decades.

Given the complexity as well as the depth of the subject, covering the topic in its entirety is well beyond the scope of this work. For that reason this paper will not discuss Kokalari's academic and personal life in the detail it requires, nor can it offer a thorough understanding of the ideologies and

the history of Social Democracy. Therefore, the focus will remain on the historical facts (mostly taken from Kokalari's essays) that led to the forming of the Party and the Social democratic 'left-overs' in present day Albania. The first section of the paper will provide a short definition of what Social Democracy is before proceeding with the historical background on the foundation of the Social Democratic Party of Albania. Based on this overview, the final section "Kokalari's Impact on the Albanian Political and Social Culture: Is Social Democracy still present or possible?" will conclude with some thoughts on Social Democracy in present day Albania.

1. About Social Democracy

With the news reportages on the 'crisis of Social Democracy in Europe' or on the former Democratic Party candidate Bernie Sanders in the US Presidential Elections, the public is given technical terms and words that it might be unfamiliar with. Essentially, the term Social Democracy is not unknown but as media coverage on it increased in the US and Europe, it is a general necessity to specify what Social Democracy is.

The term "democracy" is an essential part, since in the 19th and 20th century socialists

started to categorize themselves as „social democrats“ in order to differentiate themselves from other socialists who opposed democracy (Cf. Berman 2005:3). According to the Online Encyclopaedia Britannica Social Democracy is defined as follows: "Social democracy, [a] political ideology that advocates a peaceful, evolutionary transition of society from capitalism to socialism using established political processes. Based on 19th-century socialism and the tenets of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, social democracy shares common ideological roots with communism but eschews its militancy and totalitarianism. Social democracy was originally known as revisionism because it represented a change in basic Marxist doctrine, primarily in the former's repudiation of the use of revolution to establish a socialist society." Breaking that down into its simplest and elementary definition, one could describe it as a compromise between Socialism and Capitalism. In this aspect, as writes a modern scholar, "social democrats are socialists without the courage of revolutionary conviction or socialists who have chosen ballots over bullets (Berman 2005:3)."

2. The Foundation of the Social Democratic Party of Albania

In 1972 Kokalari finished writing her book *Si lindi Partia Social Demokratike* (engl. How the Social Democratic Party was born), a personal account on the founding of the party and the people involved.

Information regarding the roots of Social Democracy in Albania is very scarce, limited and so far not widely debated. It comes as no surprise because historically Albania does not have a lot of experience with it. Unlike Germany, Albania did not have the experience of a worker's movement or the creation of trade unions nor did it benefit from the revolution of 1848/49 that brought forth strong theoretical principles to Europe (Cf. Potthoff and Miller 2006:5). However, it has not been entirely insular to movements either. When Kokalari founded the party in 1943, Albania had encountered several national developments. According to the writer's memories the Rilindja period was very much alive when Italian fascists occupied Albania in 1939. Rilindja Kombëtare, or Albanian National Awakening that lasted from the 1870s up until the declaration of independence in 1912, resulted in a strengthened sense of the Albanian identity (in cultural, political and social aspects). The national movement came rather late, even for a Balkan nation compared to others in the 19th century.

Alongside nation building that strongly correlates with the intellectual work of the Frashëri brothers, the October Revolution in Russia has left its marks on Albania as well: “[...] *Communist groups sprang up here and there, though not everywhere in the country, who adhered to principles that were unclear and not uniform* (Kokalari 1972).”

Furthermore considerably later also came the formation of a Communist Party (CP). In fact Albania had been the only Balkan country without such a party in the beginning of the 1920s. A Communist Party had been officially formed in the Soviet Union by 1928, while it was not until 1941 that a unified CP was founded in Albania with Enver Hoxha as the Party Secretary. Musine Kokalari and Enver Hoxha originate from the same family and are closely-related cousins. Their childhood houses in Gjirokastër are within five minutes of walking distance from each other. Born in 1917 in Adana (Turkey) to parents of Gjirokastër origin, Kokalari early showed signs of love

for writing. In 1938 she left for Italy to study literature in Rome where she graduated in 1941. A year later she joined the antifascist and anticommunist movement in Rome, later in the Albanian capital Tirana (Zhiti 2012).

Shortly after the formation of the National Liberation Front (LNC) - a resistance organization that fought against the German occupiers in Albania - the anticommunist resistance movement Balli Kombëtar (engl. The National Front) was created, a heterogeneous organization of people with various political views and a more or less democratic platform that considered themselves as simple patriots (Kokalari 1972).

To unify the LNC and Balli Kombëtar, Kokalari proposed to join the National Liberation Front not as individuals but as a democratic group, or better, as a party. By getting both movements together and forming a basic democratic union, they could have been able to fight the occupiers more intensely (Ibid.). The crucial point however is that Social Democracy was supposed to serve as a 'middle way' to attract undecided forces (Ibid.). Because of disputes with the future wife of Enver Hoxha (Nexhmije Xhuglini), Kokalari left LNC and tried to re-establish the idea of a Social Democratic Party with other people.

In 1932 Kokalari encountered the lawyer Skënder Muço, the literature professor Isuf Luzaj and the linguist Selman Riza who shared many common values with Kokalari. Muço, as well as the others, were worried about the direction the war was headed. After the feuds with the dictator's future wife, Musine once again proposed the idea of forming a democratic coalition while relying on the Ten-Point Programme in accordance to Balli Kombëtar (Appendix 1).

The group then published a brochure announcing their party creation (Ibid.). This endeavor (maybe as expected), was destined to fail as on one hand Muço and Luzaj had a power struggle as to who should be in charge of the group, and on the other, the leaders of Balli Kombëtar were not really interested in democracy and wanted to continue their course as before: *"The democratic alternative was in a tragic state, as usual, caught between the Communists on the one side and the leaders of Balli on the other, who were all exerting personal influence to keep power for themselves. A tragic moment (Ibid.)."*

Nonetheless the group managed to publish a newspaper called 'Zëri i lirisë'

(engl. The Voice of Freedom) that correlated to their party with Musine Kokalari being the driving force behind it.

3. A Social Democratic Party Program

Within the newspaper, in February 1944, Musine published the Program of the Social Democratic Party (Appendix 2). In it the Party demands political freedom, which ensures the right of every citizen to practice freedom of speech, freedom of the press and the freedom to vote: “*The main reason for restrictions on political freedoms is [the lack of] social justice* (Kokalari 1944).” Striking is the fact that Kokalari supported the idea of a Balkan confederation, an idea that emerged in the beginning of the 20th century by mostly Social Democratic parties in the Balkan peninsula.

Apart from that the Party Program represents far more than a simple presentation of the party’s objectives. It highlights the four key elements of democracy itself:

- A political system for choosing and replacing the government through free and fair elections.
- The active participation of the people, as citizens, in politics and civic life.
- Protection of the human rights of all citizens.
- A rule of law, in which the laws and procedures apply equally to all citizens (Cf. Hilla University Lecture 2004).

Despite the fact that they were able to publish six issues of the newspaper, Kokalari was doubting its success. The people behind the newspaper (Kokalari, Muço, Luzaj and Riza) never met again. The lawyer Skënder Muço was executed by German troops in 1944. Within Kokalari’s (and Hoxha’s for that matter) own family 14 people were persecuted. Two of her brothers were arrested and then murdered by so-called ‘liberation soldiers’. One day later Kokalari herself has been captured and interrogated. In November of the same year she has been released and witnessed the liberation of Albania.

According to Kokalari that event marked the end of the Rilindja period “*and democratic endeavours by humane individuals who wanted to defend the poor, to protect the workers in order to save them from physical and intellectual slavery, to protect their human dignity* (Ibid.).” Thus, the dictatorship of the

Communists began and people who dared to voice their wish for political pluralism soon faced prison or even death.

4. The Note to the Allies

In the aftermath of the war, in November 1945 the British, American, French, Yugoslav and Soviet missions were still active in Albania. The summer of 1945 brought forth a new Albanian constitution that was simply a copy of the Yugoslav one (Cf. Vickers 2014:155). As the new government sought recognition, the Westerners demanded democratic elections. Around that time Musine more or less withdrew from political engagement and was working in her bookshop in Tirana.

There were talks about elections taking place on 2 December 1945. In the same year Shaban Balla, a figure active in the resistance, visited Musine Kokalari a few times and explained that they ought to do something and support the British. Initially Kokalari was not interested since she had been close to reimprisonment and did not want to get involved in other people's activities, especially not underground (Cf. Kokalari 1972). Nonetheless she agreed to ask for moral support from the Allies in form of a writing in order to postpone elections so that other parties could take part in them, initiating a pluralist government: *"We had little hope, yet something had to be done. I stuck by what I had said and did not endeavour to find out what other groups were up to. I kept my distance from other people and groups, and only expressed my idea about the Note when I was asked (Ibid.)."*

In a meeting held in November 1945 Musine formed a Note (Appendix 3) explaining the current situation in Albania and proposing to postpone elections so that various political groups could take part in them. Among the people who signed the Note were four monarchists (people who supported the former Albanian King Zog), four people from the resistance, a friend of Kokalari with Social democratic orientation and Musine herself. Balla then submitted copies of the Note to the Americans and to the British (Ibid.).

The Allies however, did not intervene with the government and kept silent on the matter which logically resulted in their inevitable: One by one the signees were arrested and accused of overthrowing the government. The

consequences for all these people are easily imaginable: Some were shot (among them Shaban Balla), most of them imprisoned. In court, defending her positions until the very end (although her fate was already sealed), Musine accepted the charges according to the government (Appendix 4). Kokalari was then sentenced to 30 years of prison, later reduced to 20 of which she served 16 (Zhiti 2012).

Terminally sick with breast cancer in her later years, Kokalari was denied treatment at the local hospital. She died in complete isolation in 1983. Regardless of the persecution she faced during her lifetime, her funeral couldn't have been more demoting. The coffin was made out of left-overs that were collected from a construction ground and a security officer from the region has been advised to tie the dead body's hands (Ibid.).

5. Kokalari's Impact on the Albanian Political and Social Culture: Is Social Democracy still present or possible?

Today's Albania has little to do with (Social) Democracy, and this for several reasons. It is inarguable that Musine Kokalari has an impact on Albanian history. However she is mostly remembered as a victim of the Communist regime and a gifted storyteller. To the wider public the formation of a Social Democratic Party in the 1940s remains more or less unknown. Did Kokalari's endeavors leave marks in the Social and Political life in Modern Albania?

Not irrelevant is the notion that in Albania there is no difference between being a 'Socialist' or being a 'Social Democrat'. Even before we start speaking of different types of democracy, democracy itself is something that needs to be discussed. These nuances of political self-determination, which are now so natural in Greater Europe, are a luxury that cannot be found in Albania. When researching for this paper and a definition of Social Democracy, sources were very limited. In fact there is only one definition in the Albanian language, provided by the Friedrich-Ebert Foundation, which is closely associated with the Social Democratic Party of Germany. An ordinary Albanian cannot even consult a Wikipedia article in the Albanian language about Social Democracy, even though two parties exist in Albania which pursue a social democratic orientation.

In 1991 Skënder Gjinushi, a former member of the Party of Labour of Albania, founded the Social Democratic Party of Albania (alb. PSD) that held seats in the Albanian Parliament between 1992 – 1996 and then again from 1997 – 2009 (Cf. Nohlen and Stöver 2010:140-142). Indeed, the party bears the same name as Kokalari's but it also closely cooperated with the Socialist Party of Albania ('reformed Socialists' as they call themselves) with whom they formed coalitions throughout their Parliament activity. To date the PSD remained quite negligible in Albanian politics.

Growing prominence and significance gained only the Socialist Movement for Integration (alb. LSI), a party that moderately represents the 'third way' between the two major parties (Socialist Party/ Democratic Party) in Albania. The LSI is a result of an inter-party dispute between the LSI leader Ilir Meta and the then leader of the Socialist Party Fatos Nano. Meta's party emphasizes its non-ideological nature although the theoretical basis is inclined towards the centre-left (as the party supports the European model of social welfare for instance) (Cf. Barbullushi 2014:88-89).

In Albania's current political landscape various factors impede an emergence of real (Social) democratic structures. Discussing the 'left-overs' of Social Democracy on Albania's political stage, it is necessary to consider the following: In order to have 'left-overs', there should have been a 'meal' in the first place.

Social democratic structures as we know them from Greater Europe can be traced back to several developments. In the 18th - 19th centuries Europe underwent a variety of social, cultural, political and technological progresses that shaped its states and their national characteristics. The Age of Enlightenment that reoriented Western philosophy, politics and science in terms of questioning authorities and the turn to rationalism, is a predecessor of the 20th century Modernism (Cf. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy 2010). Of equal importance, or even greater one, was the Industrial Revolution which allowed the simple farmer to loosen the ties to his land and cattle and seek working opportunities elsewhere in the country. The formation of trade unions is a major aspect that contributed to the creation of the Social democratic ideology. Resulting in social and economic change on the Continent, the period of Industrialisation brought forth socio-critical theorists, above all its most radical: Karl Marx. In

contrast to these developments, Albania just started to awaken from a long sleep at the end of the 19th century, countering the Ottoman Empire rule (of almost 500 years).

Criticism of lacking social-democratic structures in Albania is not entirely appropriate. Conceive of the following: Imagine that the people in the Soviet Union had never heard of Marxism but were living under it. Transferring this consideration onto the Albanian case, it may be noticed that Albania's history is characterized by the 'import' of forced ideologies and regimes. Certainly, the Republic of Albania has been living under a Communist government.

Reality however proves that they were living under a dictatorship disguised as Socialism (just as the most former Communist countries).

The lacking enthusiasm for reconciliation is one of the factors that will impede Albania's development towards an enlightened society in the long run. For one thing it seems that opinions travel faster than facts in the Albanian culture. Receiving a balanced account of Socialism and its ideologies would be very unusual. First hand sources suggest that whenever one of the major parties in Albania is in power, they have made up obstacles to avoid the opening of the Secret Police files or objected the discussion on the Communist crimes in fear of revealing an unfavourable past of certain political figures.¹ The problem is at hand: If the Albanian society does not receive information on that subject or is more comfortable with leaving the painful past behind, they will run risk to internalize and reproduce old creeds that

are still evident in several institutions throughout the country. If anything the old Communist days left behind anything in Albania, it is the resentment of Communism.

There are several factors that were left undefined in this paper, which makes that mentioned above only a portion of the reality. Not only Albania's troubled history and its aftermath are responsible for inadequate (Social) democratic structures. The problem is rooted as well in the weakness of civil society, the rise of Neoliberalism, a problematic national identity, corruption, a poor economic and industrial performance (...)

¹In order to protect the source, the source will remain anonymous

The year 2017 will mark two events that are worth paying attention to: 100 years of the October Revolution and Musine Kokalari's 100th birthday. This might be just the right opportunity to reflect on theories, ideas and processes. Although Albania's current situation is incomparable to 1943, if factored out, there are some similarities that deserve a second thought.

The presence of the US and the EU is quite strong in the country as Albania is striving for EU membership in the near future. Unfortunately the country's politics are deadlocked due to a fierce competition by the two major parties. Recalling Kokalari's endeavors to form a democratic union, there are lessons learned: Musine Kokalari made use of her right to political self-determination by taking the current situation of the country, putting it into perspective and suggesting what needs to be done in order for the people to enjoy social and political justice. This should be done by Albanians and not only by 'EU experts' or any other since the Albanians are the only ones that can realise their country's potentials and capabilities.

Although Social Democracy might not have been on the rise in the Republic of Albania and we cannot expect its people to be Social Democrats by learning about the foundation of the

PSD in 1943 or reading a brochure that explains what Social Democracy is, we can take this respective part of Albanian history and reconsider and reexamine the matter. If anything can be demonstrated, it is that there is a Social democratic tradition in the country, despite its negative connotations. As the Harvard Professor Frederik Logevall (2016) has put it quite adequately:

"This matters. Knowledge of our political past is important because it can serve as an antidote to the misuse of history by our leaders and save us from being bamboozled by analogies, by the easy 'lessons of the past.' It can make us less egocentric by showing us how other politicians and governments in other times have responded to division and challenge. And it can help us better understand the likely effects of our actions, a vital step in the acquisition of insight and maturity."

Musine Kokalari's story is a good point to begin a theoretical framework and discourse on Social Democracy which should involve various actors of society. In an ever-changing world, did she not cooperate with interest groups whose beliefs did not coincide with hers? Is that not the essence of social justice?

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Appendix 1

6. The Ten-Point Program of the Nationalist Organization Balli Kombëtar

The Albanian nationalist organization *Balli Kombëtar* [The National Front] decided on its course of action when it was created, and since the calamitous day of 7 April 1939, it has been assembling men of honour who are willing to take responsibility for the nation upon themselves. We have already published our objectives and platform in brochures. Nonetheless, we wish to repeat here, once again, what we are working and fighting for:

1. We are fighting for the red and black flag, for the defence of the rights of the Albanian people.
2. We are fighting for a democratic, ethnic and free Albania with a modern society.
3. We are fighting for an Albania in which freedom of speech and thought will prevail.
4. We are fighting for an Albania with a proper economic and social balance so that there will be no more exploiters and exploited, that is to say, so that no one will live at the expense of his fellow man, so that there will be no farmers without enough land to live on, so that there will be no blue and white collar workers without housing and security, i.e. we are fighting for a stable Albania with a thoroughly reformed economic system in accordance with the wishes and needs of the Albanian people.
5. We are fighting for an Albania in which the suppressed talents of all strata of the population will come to light, be supported and flourish with the help of Albanian schooling.
6. We are fighting for an Albania in which all positive contributions will be properly appreciated, independent of age, region or faith.
7. We are fighting to create an Albania run by people who have not been compromised, by Albanians who have done their utmost at every time and under all conditions for the salvation and welfare of their country, by competent and honest working men.

8. We are fighting for an Albania that, in a strict and exemplary manner, will punish all anti- patriots, traitors, lackeys, troublemakers, speculators and spies; for an Albania in which there will be no place for hypocrites, sycophants, feudal oppressors and anyone who hinders the development and progress of our nascent country.
9. We are fighting to harmonize and unite the creative energies of the nation, to create an intellectual and spiritual union of all Albanians.
10. We are fighting to mobilize all the vital forces of the nation against the occupiers in order to realize the ideals of *Balli Kombëtar*

[from the brochure *Dekalogu i organizatës nacionaliste Balli Kombëtar*, 1942. Translated from the Albanian by Robert Elsie.]

Appendix 2

7. The Program of the Social Democratic Party

published in the newspaper *Zëri i lirisë*, Tirana, 1 February 1944

1. A primary objective of the Social Democratic Party is to ensure social justice and political freedom.
2. The Social Democratic Party takes an evolutionist stance as far as economic collectivism is regarding.
3. Other primary objectives of the Social Democratic Party are to ensure enough land for the farmers to work on, and to eliminate exploitation, speculation and parasitism. It also aims at providing food, housing and other needs for the working class to make their lives liveable. For the Agrarian reform – initial steps will be taken to divide up the land. The Party will endeavour to implement a social security scheme to afford protection to all classes of society.
4. Political freedom means ensuring the right of every citizen to freedom of speech, freedom of thought, freedom of the press, freedom of private initiative and freedom to vote (parliamentary opposition). The Party will endeavour to lay foundations to contribute to the education of all classes of Albanian society democratically and to prepare them for the coming regime under which social justice and political freedom will reign. The main reason for restrictions on political freedoms is [the lack of] social justice.
5. With regard to relations with other nations, the Party will not be led by narrow egotistical nationalism, but by simple patriotism that concords with feelings of respect and affection for other nations, and it will support the idea of creating a Balkan confederation as soon as possible.
6. Another objective of the Party is to fight against all occupiers for the independence of a united Albania within its own ethnic borders.
7. [Extract from: *Si u formua Partia Social-Demokrate*. Edited by Platon Salim Kokalari (Tirana: Naim Frashëri 2000), and reprinted by Novruz Xh. Shehu (Tirana: Geer 2009), p. 403-436. Translated from the Albanian by Robert Elsie.]

Appendix 3

Tirana, March 1945

8. "National Organization Legality"²

2.10. [Memorandum of the Democratic Union addressed to the Allies]³

During the Italian and German occupation in Albania, the communists fought against the occupying forces under the motto "National Liberation Army" whose political program is entirely based on a democratic system. A brilliant idea gave the opportunity to expand their ranks in a considerable way by expanding boyhood which fight with joy for the liberation of their fatherland. The reason why a big part of the boyhood joined the Communists lies in the fact that two other nationalist groups (Balli Kombëtar) and supporters of Zog)) fearing Communism and being under the influence of the Allies' press did not continue the fight against the occupying forces. The boyhood and other nationalists who seized part of the National Liberation Front did not intend to fall into a trap, raising the power of Communist regime in Albania.

The National Liberation Front thus became the only authorized political group under the directives and Communist control. Nationalists that constitute a majority are not allowed to form a separate party from the Communists; they are also not allowed to distance themselves from the Front and forming a party outside the Front. In both cases being accused as saboteurs, fascists and reactionists "the case of Gjergj Kokoshi, the first minister of education in the government of Enver Hoxha" shows everything very clearly.

² Some other reports addressed to the British Mission are archived in the folder 1081 F.1 in AMPB of the investigative voice of Ing. Abdulla Muça. The initial original copies of the Monarchist Party and the organization of the Democratic Union, after merging groups on 20th November 1945, were translated into English and surrendered to the British Mission secretly and directly. The Monarchist Memorandum, (copy taken by the State Security). According to the statement of Enver Hasa in the investigation office it is translated by him in Italian and afterwards in English by Italian officer Bici.

³ The memorandum neither holds a head nor a date, but on p.2 it states that "Albania has been under dictatorship for 13 months" before the 2nd December elections, i.e it is around the end of November 1945, [The memorandum text is written by Musine Kokalari at the meeting of the Social Democratic Union (BDSH) in the house of Ali Kavajës].

2. OVERVIEW OF THE CURRENT SITUATION

(A). The headship of the anti-fascist council of the National Liberation, councils of prefectures and deputy prefectures as well as the smallest localities; they all are under the Communist direction and control.

(B). The three powers, i.e legislative, executive and judicial, whose separation guarantees political freedom, are in fact a mixture. Mergence of the offices are made for this purpose. For example it is that the president of the police is at the same time also member of the panel (under the president), a member of the general staff, head of the highest court, head of the political commissariat of an army etc.

(C). The four freedoms (freedom of speech, of religion, of necessity and fear) were stamped under feet.

(D). The whole legislation is taken from that of Yugoslavia; the most important laws are a faithful translation of Yugoslav ones.

(E). In all programs our press and the radio, Russian views are submitted.

(F). Police work is done by the Directorate of Protection protecting the people, programs and activities which represent a second G.P.U. Its chairman is one of the two general secretaries of the Communist Party of Albania, the other being Enver Hoxha himself.

The number of those who are savagely murdered during the first days of the regime (150 without any trial [sic] in Tirana and Rreth) and those that are on death row and then densely

executed, they are more than 1000 in the country. If we take France as an example whose population is 45 times larger than ours, at the same time it would have 2321 death penalties, people can understand the tragedy of the Albanian people. Many of them were executed because if they would have been alive, they would have threatened the unity of the actual regime. It is important to mention that a few months ago in Durrës some people transmitted their government a telegram where they demanded mercy for some people who were sentenced to death by the local court, they were arrested at once, delivered to the court and sentenced to imprisonment though their attitude went against judicial deliberations which is regarded as the highest expression of the will of the people!

The protector of the people's activities and ways by which justice runs have created an atmosphere of fear and terror throughout the country. This has

naturally increased the number of those who are dissatisfied I fear and fear alone has them forbidden to organize an opposition.

If you don't know this essential thing it's impossible to understand because people will be voting on December 2nd, what else can they do. But Albania is since 13 months under the worst dictatorship her history has ever seen. Go to villages and talk with the people in secrecy and it will be then that you will realize that pressure has been exerted on them in favor of the unique list of National Liberation Front.

(H). Albania has never had an army as big as the current one; its number has doubled since the liberation of the country and now comprises around 60,000 holding a large army that is largely devoted to the fact that the authorities fear that the increasing number of the dissatisfied could pose a danger to the regime.

This policy measure has had a devastating effect not only on our finances that include more than half of the budget for the hosts, but also for agriculture and in farming in which the serious lack of labor force is felt.

(I). In our administrations are now four times more functionaries than before. This answers to the fact that the Government tries to find a job to loyalists no matter what capabilities they have. They also keep some of the professionals, the good ones, to make the real job in terrain. This has created some kind of chaos and this is the main reason why jobs are not available in outer regions.

(J). Law of agriculture is one of the most important reforms for which the regime praises itself. It is done and applied in the most extreme:

1/ The land that was left of the previous owner (15 hectares), it is insufficient to provide them with a living throughout that there is enough land for all.

2/ The agricultural law, so as there is, is just the only one confiscation though the whole land is not being rewarded anymore.

(K). The government has lost their trust into traders due to the measures they have undertaken over various branches of economic activity. The private initiative has almost completely disappeared.

(L). As with regard to the foreign policy, the current government remains loyal to the Belgrade-Moscow axis. The slogan 'Enver-Tito' has become common to use.

3. WHO WE ARE

It is needed to emphasize that we are no enemies of Communism. Although the non-existing Communism would be a driving force towards social progress. We on the other hand are opponents of this policy that violates political freedoms and raises a despotic government within a democratic country.

4. IS DEMOCRACY POSSIBLE IN ALBANIA?

It will be the first time there will be a Western-style democracy in Albania. On the other hand this does not mean that there is need for a totalitarian government in our country. We believe that a relative democracy with at least two parties is fully possible in Albania. This would give the the majority of the people who are not communist join a party whose views are able to represent their political ideas.

5. WHAT IS OUR PROGRAM?

(a). Domestic policy

The immediate establishment of full political freedom: Freedom of religion, freedom of the press, human freedom, and protection before the law and before court trial of elected representatives.

(b). Foreign policy

Participation in the establishment of the United Nations based on the principle of collective international security. Keeping friendly relations with all our greatest allies and with all neighbors [sic], all our neighbors. With all our strength we will try to give our contribution for a peaceful and better future in the Balkans, and to assure the integrity of our territory, in conformity with the spirit and the Atlantic map.

(c). Social policy

The physical and moral improvement of life for the working class. Full participation of the workers and farmers in political life. Unleashing worker's organizations and their participation in order to establish working conditions. Democratization of institutions.

Restoration of the dignity of the family.

(d). Economic policy

Full respect for private property within the boundaries of social functions. State control over essential industries and encouraging private initiatives and enterprises. Agricultural reform.

The establishment of modern houses for the peasantry and the creation of agricultural cooperatives.

6. OUR FIERY DESIRE

Considering that your mission in Albania is sacred, why be obliged to tell the world the real situation of our country, we hope that we will ascertain the current situation to talk about free elections in order not to keep the truth in the dark.

With this spirit, we hope that you will become not only the opposition interpreter but the desire is that almost the whole nation will be pushed in showing the willingness for free elections, in order to give the case to the people to freely express its will and thus raise a representative democratic government.

We will see a large number of realizations that will be shown on behalf of the current government. We do not question the good will of the government, but in the same time we call for the necessity to accentuate that many of these realizations have existed before November 1944. Regarding bridges and other works of this kind every Albanian knows that all of these were built by Italian companies, under Albanian supervision, with material that was brought before from Italy.

PS. PLEASE DELETE THIS REPORT AT ONCE WHEN YOU HAVE READ IT IF THE POLICE OR SPIES FIND IT OUR LIVES ARE IN DANGER.

[Memorandum taken from: Bashkimi Demokratik Shqiptar 1946; translated from the Albanian by Alina Wagner]

Appendix 4

Excerpt from Kokalari's trial

The interrogation began. I was asked about the Note. They had already spoken to other people before me, but the latter had not been sufficiently clear to defend themselves.

I began as follows: "We drafted the Note on behalf of three groups to send it to the Allies whom you allowed to observe the vote because it was supposed to be democratic. We did this so that a democratic coalition with its various platforms could present its candidates and so that we could take part in the elections, if they could be put off for a while."

"Curious," replied Nesti Kerenxhi, who was head of the *Sigurimi*. "You come from a democratic, anti-Zogist family. How did you come to join these monarchists?"

"I learned this lesson from you," I answered. "You people are Communists and the Communist Party ran the Front, but yet you joined forces with Bazi i Canës, who was widely known to be representing Ahmet Zogu."

They gave no reaction, unsure of what they should say.

"You attempted to overthrow the government," they declared.

"No, what we called for was a postponement of the elections. I did not have a group behind me at all, just two men. How could we have overthrown the government?"

"You were making use of the ruling class, taking advantage of their forces to take over the leadership," they countered.

"That is not true. I did not even know what forces they had. And what if they did have a lot of forces? If they did not manage to liquidate you when the Germans were here, how could they ever do it now?"

"They, too, were behind a postponement."

"I am only responsible for what I say myself. I cannot be held responsible for the objectives of other people. If they had been able to overthrow the government in power, you can be sure that they would wipe us and our

ideas off the face of the earth, too.”

“Why did you not send the Note to the government?” they asked. “We would not have arrested you.”

“We could not do that. If we had sent the Note to the government, people would have claimed it was all pre-arranged by the Communists to find out who was behind the group. All the groupings and their programmes were then to come out into the open. If they won the elections, fine, and if they lost, things would end there. With the Note, we wanted to force the Allies to take a stance. We sent them the Note with the hope that they would announce: ‘There are groups in Albania who want to take part in the elections. The elections must be free. Everyone must be allowed to take part.’ But they did not do so, and I now have the difficult task of justifying the contents of the Note.”

“You were sowing the seeds of dissension.”

“Not at all. We were not led by elements within the Front. Show me the person who will state that we were stirring up trouble! We wanted the Front to be led by one party, the Communist Party, or the Social Democratic party or another.”

“We were the ones who were doing the fighting,” they said.

“So were we. Perhaps not with arms, but in other ways. We did not collaborate with the occupiers. You know full well that I did nothing against you, nor did I ever collaborate with the occupiers. You are going to sentence me, not because I am guilty of anything, but because you Communists will not allow any other parties and, to justify this, you claim that we were trying to overthrow the government. I am innocent. I am not a Communist and that, in itself, is not crime. You won the elections and I have ended up in prison. You arrested me and say that I am guilty. I cannot accept this.”

“Did you want to have your own publishing facilities?” they asked. “Yes,” I replied.

“But who would possibly have collaborated with you at this press?”

“What a silly question. Are we not able to print a newspaper? If we had won, we would have published a newspaper in which people would have

expressed their opinions. You would then see who was writing. You never declared that everyone had to be a Communist. You said you were defending the free press.”

“And you defend the Fascist press.”

“I am not a Fascist. I am for a democratic culture. I am a follower of the venerable Sami Frashëri. I am not a Communist. It is something I do not understand.”

“Let us bring this to a close. If you had sent the Note to the government, you would not have been arrested. Did you not ever think you would end up in prison?”

“I was almost certain of it. But at least I know why I am in prison. If I am wrongly convicted, I will know that, too.”

I defended my position, in writing, too.

The state prosecutor, Gjon Banushi, and the judge, Frederik Nosi, repeated their accusations at the trial held at the high court, and I defended my ideas right to the last.

The special trial began on 2 June. The presiding judge was Frederik Nosi and the state prosecutor was Nefzat Hasnedari. They began with Sami Çeribashi’s group, then the monarchists, and finally me. The judge asked:

“Who wrote the Note?”

“Musine did,” they said.

“Is this true, Musine?”

“Yes,” I replied.

“Who added the other names?”

“Musine,” they replied.

“Is this true?” they asked.

“Yes,” I replied, “I added the names of all the groups that wanted to take part, with their own political platforms.”

“But there were four persons in each group, so why did you do all the work alone?” asked the judge.

“Four were sufficient for each group. The fewer there were, the less might end up in prison. But everyone was free to attend.”

The day of reckoning came, and I found myself in the dock. I stepped forward to the microphone. The judge, Frederik Nosi, asked me:

“Do you accept the charges?”

“According to your political logic, yes. According to mine, no.”

“Enough with your sophisms!” shouted Frederik Nosi.

“There is no sense in your asking me then. Read the trial documents,” I stated, satisfied with myself, and sat down at my place.

The closing arguments were severe. Whatever was discussed, it always came back to me. I thought that they were going to sentence me to death. In addition, the prosecutor accused me of the sins of the rest of them. I made no comment.

The day then came for the accused to defend themselves. I refused the lawyer and prepared my own defence. They had no idea what they were doing. The prosecutor accused me of creating a group to overthrow the government and called for me to be sentenced to thirty years in prison. With my speech in my hand, I approached the microphone and began to read as follows: “There are thirty-six people accused here at this trial. Four groups, three of which have only one thing in common – a Note sent to the Allies so that the elections could be postponed and a democratic coalition could take part in them. There was no question of overthrowing the government. It was simply for democratic elections.”

The judge and the prosecutor both rose to their feet and interrupted me.

“We are not going to let you continue with this defence.”

“If you stop me and will not allow a prisoner to defend herself, I will sit down because I have no other choice,” I said.

I went back to my seat. Shortly thereafter, the officer Manoli came over and confiscated my defence. I gave it to him.

They asked me for a concluding word. I asked for justice. The trial lasted for 15 days. In the end, the judge sentenced me to twenty years and I was incarcerated. [...]

[Extract from: *Si u formua Partia Social-Demokrate*. Edited by Platon Salim Kokalari (Tirana: Naim Frashëri 2000), and reprinted by Novruz Xh. Shehu (Tirana: Geer 2009), p. 403-436.

Translated from the Albanian by Robert Elsie.]